A PENNY WHISTLE

Together with The Babette Ballads

By

BERT LESTON TAYLOR

Foreword by Franklin P. Adams

WHEN Bert Leston Taylor died last March and the signature B. L. T., ceased to appear at the bottom of the column "A Line-o'-Type or Two,"* which he had created twenty years ago, and which he stopped conducting only a week before his death, a sense of acute and personal loss was felt by more readers than could be felt by the taking away of any other writer in American journalism.

He was about to issue these verses, his best, to his notion, of the past eight years. The title and the sequence of the poems are his also.

The best of B. L. T.'s verse means that no better light verse has ever been printed.

FRANKLIN P. ADAMS

* In "The Chicago Tribune"

ALFRED A. KNOPF

PUBLISHER, N. Y.

Bert Leston Taylor

was born at Goshen, Mass., November 13, 1866 and died at Chicago, March 19, 1921. B. L. T. had, at the time of his death, several volumes in active preparation, of which the present is the first to be published in the uniform, collected edition of his works. A second, *The So-Called Human Race*, will be ready in the Spring of 1922.

$1.50 net

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A
Penny Whistle

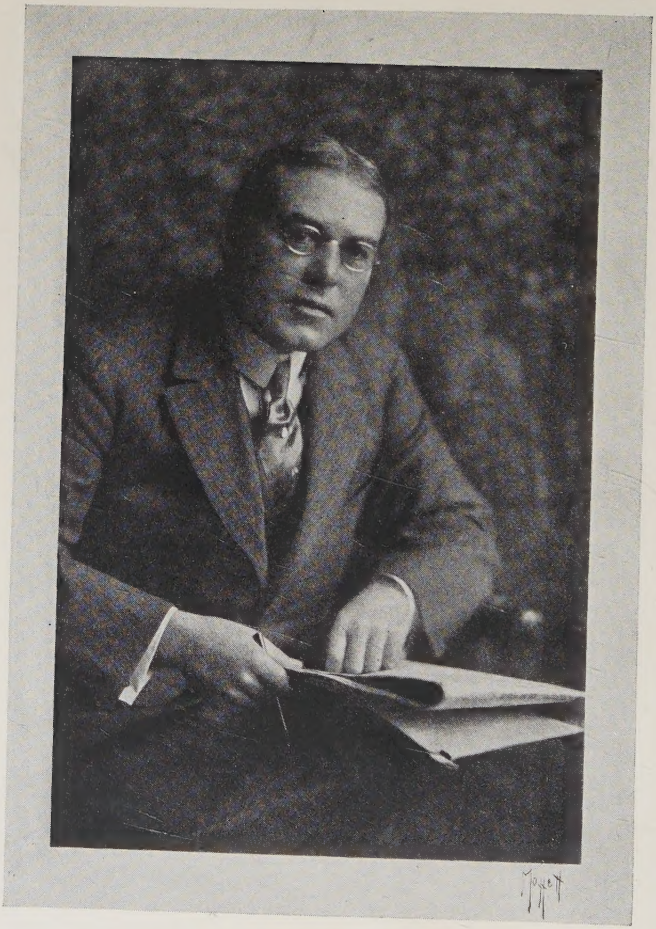
BOOKS BY
BERT LESTON TAYLOR

A PENNY WHISTLE

THE SO-CALLED HUMAN RACE
[*Spring* 1922]

And others in a uniform collected edition, to be ready later.

Alfred A. Knopf



Bert Leston Taylor

A Penny Whistle

Together with The Babette Ballads

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With a Foreword by

Franklin P. Adams

New York 1921

Alfred · A · Knopf

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TO POSTERITY

(*Tune by Michael William Balfe*)

When other pens and other lips
Their tales of mirth shall tell,
When newer quirks and newer quips
Your megrims shall dispel,
There may, perhaps, in such a day
Some recollection be
Of one— .But no, I'm free to say
You'll not remember me.

B. L. T.

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Foreword

By Franklin P. Adams

I should as soon attempt the task of endorsing the sunrise as that of writing a preface to the verses of B. L. T. But endorsing the sunrise is a far from unpleasant occupation. And the only difficulty in writing a foreword to "A Penny Whistle" is that it is not easy to compress into a few words everything I have been thinking, for more than twenty years, about Bert Taylor's verse.

For, though, to my mind, he was easily the best paragrapher that ever achieved the art of putting the front page, or the leading editorial, or a whole political, literary, or artistic situation into twenty-five words, his verses were even better than his paragraphs. And though, in his later years—such is the *cacoethes contribuendi*—his verses became less frequent, his output for twenty years was greater and its quality higher than those of anybody else in the same high profession of writing light, satirical verse. I hate the ranking system applied to artistic endeavor; but I place B. L. T.

always on a plane with Calverley, and frequently far above him.

Taylor never wrote when he had nothing to say, and when he wrote he said what he had to say so much better than anybody else could say it that he must have been the despair of every columnist in the country. Certainly he was mine; and after reading a piece of his verse treating, perhaps, the same theme I had treated,—sometimes the same day,—I felt like chucking my pen away with an unenvious—the discrepancy was too great for envy—but despairing "What's the use?"

Nowhere in literature have results been achieved with greater or surer simplicity. The Taylor verse is sure; in each line is the utmost effort; he used to say that if you could write a 99% line in three minutes and a 100% line in nine hours, or nine days, there should be no problem of conduct; that though maybe nobody would know the difference, you were writing for yourself, and nothing short of your uttermost was thinkable. And he never spared himself. In 1907 we were writing a libretto together. I generally was willing to let a careless line go in, on the assumption that nobody would hear the words of a song, and that the operetta probably wouldn't be produced anyway (which it wasn't); but Taylor would fret and cast about and

buy another thesaurus and use two days to improve one line of a lyric. Nor, as sometimes happens with great painstakers, was spontaneity sacrificed. I never knew a single instance of a line not being better for this passionate idealism of Taylor's. And often, later, when I saw some verse in his column, I thought of the hours he probably had worked on it to make it the inevitable line—the line that makes the reader believe no other possibly could have occurred to the writer.

It is the fashion, and the habit of supposed kindness, when a man like Taylor has died, to say that he never wrote a malicious line, that his wit always was gentle and his humor harmless. Nothing could be sillier. Taylor was full of healthy malice —sometimes "the sunny malice of a faun," but the malice that could help to destroy the faker and the poser; his column administered hundreds of hard, deserved, and decidedly ungentle hits at pretenders and shammers.

* * * * * * *

When I went to Chicago to B. L. T.'s memorial service, it was necessary for me to write three columns in one day in order to make the trip. If he could have seen it, I should have written a paragraph to the effect that my wish was that it

was he having to sweat out three columns to attend my memorial service. He would have chuckled at that, I think.

If my monument be enduring as brass, it will be, I am certain, because I wrote the foreword to "A Penny Whistle." And therefore I should like to go on record as saying that much of B. L. T.'s verse will last as long as anything in light, satirical, non-emotional verse. And yet, proud as I am of the job of writing this foreword,—which would have been shorter and better if I had said that nobody in B. L. T.'s game could approach, or ever had approached him, for speed and control,—and avid as I am of living, I should not quarrel with a fate that had arranged it so that Bert Taylor, tonight, were writing an introduction to a collection of my stuff.

The Dardanelles

(To Messrs. Kipling, Noyes, and Others.)

Come forth, ye lusty singers,
  And sing to beat the band!
Here, by the gods, to stir the clods
  Is matter to your hand!
Sing of the great armada,
  And Moslem citadels
That sank, shell-beat, when Carden's fleet
  Drove on the Dardanelles!

The spacious *Queen Elizabeth,*
  With all her puissant train,
Vengeance and *Agamemnon,*
  Triumph and *Charlemagne*—
High Heaven! were I a singer
  Who sang in epic style,
With this t' inspire I'd hit the lyre
  And spill a song worth while.

Where will ye find a battle
  Like this in ancient lore?
On such a fight the morning light
  Has never streamed before.
Step forth, ye swaggering poets
  Who do the big bow-wow;
Cut loose and sing the biggest thing
  In the brave days of Now!

Ataraxia

To purge what I am pleased to call my mind
  Of matters that perplex it and embarrass,
I get a glass, and seek until I find,
  High in the heaven, southward from Polaris,
A wisp of cloud—a nebula by name:
Andromeda provides a starry frame.

It's quite remote. I hesitate to say
  How many million light-years it is distant.
But I can make the journey any day,
  When earthly cares become a bit insistent—
Propelled by thought-waves—through the star-
    frame pass
Like little Alice through the Looking-Glass.

There, gazing back, I see our flock of stars
  Shine palely in the void, a patch of vapor.
Far from the madding crowd's ignoble jars,
  Sequestered from the clamant daily paper,
I breathe awhile in measureless content—
Alone at last, 'neath a new firmament!

If you would cultivate a soul serene,
  A mind emancipated from emotion,
There's nothing like entire change of scene—
  Some far-off isle in space's shoreless ocean.
It's well, at times, to change your universe:
The new one, if not better, can't be worse.

Horace on a Penny Whistle

I.— (TO Q. H. F.)

(*Before paraphrasing certain of his Odes.*)

Dear Horace, you've been paraphrased
  So often and so badly,
By men who ponderously praised
  And took your verses sadly—

I wonder whether you, whose heart
  Was light as any thistle,
Would not approve my simpler art,
  And like my penny whistle.

You have been "done" so many times
  In fashion fine and futile,
You might esteem my tinkling rimes
  And listen to me tootle.

My Latin is, like Nanki-Poo,
  "A thing of shreds and patches";
More pertinent my *mood* to you,
  If so *your* mood it matches.

Be that assured, I'll pipe ahead
  Without the least misgiving:
The letter of your song is dead,
  The spirit still is living.

II.— (TO TYNDARIS.)

Loveliest of hills, Lucretilis!
No fairer slopes the eyes behold
When Faunus leaves his mount for this,
To lay a spell on wood and wold.

He guards my goats from covert ills,
From summer's sun and winter's gale,
And while enchantment holds the hills
They graze within a sacred pale.

The snake is moveless in the grass,
The wolf is dormant in his den,
The she-goats with the young ones pass
Unharmed through every brake and fen.

The gods, sweet Tyndaris, hold me dear,
Pleased with my muse and piety,
For Peace has made a dwelling here,
And Plenty's horn is spilled for me.

Come, fly the dogstar's baleful ray,
And hither wing, a while to dwell.
Here, in this cool and hidden way,
Of love and lovers we will tell.

On Teian strings thou'lt sing to me
The ancient tale of Him and Her—
Of Circe and Penelope,
Heartsick for one adventurer.

The product of a virtuous vine
Shall stay us 'neath the poplar's shade;
So innocent my Lesbian wine,
All men may quaff it unafraid.

The brawling son of Semele
Shall not embroil himself with Mars:
My wine breeds nought but amity,
There's not a scowl in twenty jars.

Thou speak'st of Cyrus? Heed him not,
Nor fear that he may do thee harm.
Come! All the joys the gods allot
Await thee at my Sabine farm.

Round and Round

"Rimes are the rudders of verses."

The verses of the modern pote,
  The things he labels "free,"
Resemble much a little boat
  That's rudderless at sea.

The pote rides in his cockleshell,
  Not knowing where he's bound,
And, tossed about from swell to swell,
  Goes round and round and round.

You see them bobbing everywhere
  Upon the lith'ry main,
And no one seems to know, or care,
  If they get home again.

Now those who wish may put to sea,
  And pitch and toss and roll,
Like Gotham's celebrated Three
  Who voyaged in a bowl.

Give *me* to steer a steady barge,
  Through meadows green and cool
That's hauled along a grassy marge
  By Pegasus my mule.

A Song for the First Cavalry, I. N. G.

We come from the mart and the mill,
From the ways of the worker we come;
We're called to the plain and the hill—
Far called by the roll of a drum.

And this is the blessing we ask:
Lord God, make us men in thy sight,
And stead ev'ry heart for the task
When forward we ride to the fight.

A scramble of races and creeds,
We're a little of this and of that,
With a dash of the Persians and Medes,
Who would fight at the drop of a hat.

One faith we are sworn to defend,
One cause we are armed to uphold:
Then ho! for what fortune may send!
And a yell for the flag we unfold!

And this is the blessing we ask:
Lord God, make us men in thy sight,
And stead ev'ry heart for the task
When forward we ride to the fight!

The Balance

There is no thought or deed to-day,
  There is no thing that's said or done,
That serves the world in any way
  Unless it serves to hold the Hun.

There is no friend, however fast,
  Whose friendship's worth a second thought
Who does not place this first and last,
  And count all other things as naught.

For nothing matters, small or great,
  Nor will, until the fight is won—
Until the Hun's denied the gate,
  And silenced every ruthless gun.

War

We give our children drums to beat
Before they stand upon their feet;
We give them swords and soldiers gay,
And at the game of war they play.
We bend the twig of humankind,
Yet marvel if the tree's inclined.

Early we learn that might is right,
That life itself is one long fight.
This world's a battlefield, we teach;
Business is war—a common speech.
We bash our brother on the nose,
Yet weep if nations come to blows.

Our poems and pictures, books and plays
The doughty deeds of warriors praise.
Our mode of speech, our mode of life
Are echoes of the ancient strife.
The girls dress *à la militaire,*
Yet—"war's a horrible affair."

The Devotee

In a cathedral cool and dim
  I watched her for a space.
She sat there, motionless of limb,
  And rapture in her face.

It was an ancient, storied pile
  That all the tourists know—
Built in a very Gothic style
  A many years ago.

"Some devotee of art," I said,
  "Is sitting, thrilling, there."
The lady knelt and bowed her head:
  To whom was made her prayer?

Ah, who can say? I only know
  That when she left the place
I, too, was strangely moved to go,
  Lured by her lovely face.

I knew nor cared what might betide,
  Nor what the step foreboded;
But—hardly had I got outside
  When *bang!* the bomb exploded!

Grand Op.

If opera "flats" were done by Tintoretto,
Instead of being painted by machine,
I'd lend no ear to music or libretto,
But spend the evening gazing at the scene.

If opera "books" were written by a poet
And not the work of literary "shines,"
The band might play and I should never know it;
I'd sit content to listen to the lines.

If opera scores were more than ornamental,
Were music pure and simple, nobly planned—
Instead of being merely incidental—
I'd close my eyes and listen to the band.

But op. at best is but a combination,
It isn't this or that thing or the next;
The song but serves the scene as decoration,
The scene but serves to decorate the text.

So when to op. in raiment glad I amble,
'Tis not as music worshipper I go.
The thing that draws me is the toot enscramble—
The purple pageant of the Passing Show.

The Opera Tenor

I'm not, as I have said, unsympathetic:
I freely yield the tributary tear.
And even when the sorrow is mimetic
I lend an interested eye and ear.
I must, however, make one reservation:
The tributary tear-drop I withhold
When listening to a tenor's ululation;—
The sorrows of the tenor leave me cold.

I'm desolated by the woes of Mimi,
And Butterfly can always make me bawl;
My eyes when Violetta sings are streamy,
When Tosca weeps I have to leave the hall.
But Canio may break his heart vibrato,
Rodolfo all his miseries unfold,
And still, despite the 'cello sobbligato,
The sorrows of the tenor leave me cold.

Lucia or Juliet can get me going
(I always take an extra handkerchief);
The tenor person, though, with all his blowing,
Fails somehow to communicate his grief.
I listen to him dry-eyed as a cactus,
The while his heart-corroding tale is told.
I don't know why it should be, but the fact is
The sorrows of the tenor leave me cold.

The Busy Music Critic

(Time, any Sunday afternoon.)

At half-past three he gets around to hear
Herr Stimerthal, the well-known chanticleer.
The singer takes so long to clear his throat,
The critic cannot stay to hear a note.

Three-fifty finds him in another hall,
Where chamber music holds a host in thrall.
He stays a minute here, then hurries off
To hear the new pianist, Hupinkoff.

At four-fifteen he strikes the Studebaker,
To listen to another music-maker.
'Tis intermission, and ere that is done
The busy critic has to up and run.

So, like the bee that flits from sweet to sweeter,
Or like the man who comes to read the meter,
The music critic makes his merry round,
And covers, as it were, a lot of ground.

To Mr. Yeats

". . . For there's more enterprise
In walking naked."
—Mr. Yeats in "Poetry."

Singer of *Innisfree* and *Wandering Aengus,*
Put on your clothes and smite the "blooming lyre"
You smote erewhile. Sing us the songs you sang us—
Of *Cathleen* and *The Land of Heart's Desire.*
Walk with us through long dappled grass at golden noon,
And pluck at eve "the silver apples of the moon."

Too long in alien fields you've been a rover;
Back to the fairies, fogs, and Druid stuff!
Be like the thrush, who "sings each song twice over,"
Knowing that we shall never have enough.
Else we may fancy that you never can recapture
(As Mr. Browning wrote) that "first fine careless rapture."

When Yeats Shakes Hands

When Yeats shakes hands you feel that he
Is just as sweet as he can be—
The very pink of courtesy.

He doesn't mind how much you stare;
Say what you will, he doesn't care.
You see, he doesn't know you're there.

His gaze is fixed far, far away,
On some deep glade where fairies play
In robes of green and silver-gray.

And while the horns of Elfland toot
He doesn't care a Celtic hoot
If you are vocal or are mute.

He's looking past your starboard ear,
And has no notion you are near.
Of course, you feel a little queer.

But think not you are coldly sped:
'Tis as the Dublin copper said:
" 'Tis but the po'thry in his head."

Lady Gregory

Among the places old and new
That I have wished to travel to
Is that compounded Tear and Smile
Which people call the Emerald Isle.
And of the prospect I shall find
I have a picture in my mind—
Of moor and meadow, glen and bog,
Of hill and wood, and sea and fog,
And all that fancy understands
By "hollow lands and hilly lands."

These Irish landscapes I can see
When Lady Gregory talks to me.
The quiet of the lakes and skies
Is in her deep and tranquil eyes;
The dreams of a poetic race
Are in her wise and kindly face;
And when she smiles I have the key
To Irish wit and jollity,
And music from the merry heart
In hedge and cabin, field and cart.

Dear lady, when upon a day
To Ireland's coast I take my way,

Familiar pictures I shall find—
Already they are stored in mind.
No need to journey oversea;
You bring the Irish land to me.

Tipperary

(If Mr. Yeats had written it.)

I will arise and go now, and go to Tipperary;
The roads are unending, 'tis a long, long way to go.
A cloud-pale maid I'll find there, a glimmering, glamouring fairy,
And life will be one grand purple glow.

I will arise and go now, and go to Tipperary;
Long, long is the way there, and the roads in bad repair.
But midnight here is martial, and noon is military,
And evening filled with the trumpet's blare.

I will arise and go now, the nights are getting chilly;
The wind sweeps in the sedge by the curlew-haunted shore.
No curlews are in Leicester, no sedge in Piccadilly,
Only the fife and the deep drum corps.

The Irish Poet Laments His Lot

(To be chanted, the time marked with graceful movements of the hand.)

I wander utter as a cloud,
  The worst paid Jack o' any trade,
While all the plaudits of the crowd
  To witty man and clown are paid.

The clever man is in the mode,
  He draws his comfortable check,
While Po'thry walks the rocky road,
  And great Art gets it in the neck.

I would be wing-free as the burrds,
  I would be foot-free as the fox,
But I am set to piling words
  As little children pile their blocks.

And is it not a bitther thing
  That men should be compelled by law
To thrum upon a lute and sing,
  For not enough to feed a daw?

But 'tis the law, so without price
  I thrum and sing in hedge and field,
Until in heaven's good time the thrice
  Accursèd statute is repealed.

The Only Way

When good Saint Maël, steered by the Deuce,
  Sailed northward in his granite trough,
A devil of a gale broke loose
  And carried him a long way off,
Flinging the saint on high and dry land—
As told in Monsieur France's "Penguin Island."

The zealous father, there and then,
  Baptized the birds in his best style,
And, this dispatched, took ship again,
  Hitching a cable to the isle.
With no hell-driven gale to blind him,
Southward he sailed, and towed the isle behind
    him.

Islands to-day are rooted fast,
  Obedient to nature's laws.
The age of miracles is past;
  A matter for regret, because
The tale of Maël holds a suggestion
For settling the eternal Irish Question.

If that great man could come again
  And navigate his magic trough,

If he could tie a good stout chain
To Erin's isle and tow it off—
So far that it would float back never—
The Irish Question would be solved forever.

Absolute Zero

When I behold night's tapestry of stars,
  And with a glass pick up its glowing pattern,
When I look on the ruddy mask of Mars
  And on the pale ring-circled ball of Saturn;

When I reflect that Earth is but a drop
  In the tremendous bucket of the universe,
It gives me pause: I am constrained to stop
  And estimate the value of my puny verse.

Is there, I ask, in all this mundane sphere
  (The phrase is old, but for the rime essential)
Aught more inane than what is printed here,
  More immaterial, inconsequential?

Is there in all the universe, I ask
  Myself in accents kind of sad and solemn,
A thing less vital than my daily task,
  A thing of less account than this here Column?

YES! There is one thing one step nearer nil,
  A thing more pointless, witless, dull, excuseless:
The opinion of the gentlemen who spill
  Good ink to write me that this Col is useless.

The Astronomer

(*Copenhagen reports that Encke's comet has reappeared.*)

He can route the sun Arcturus,
  He can map Orion's bands;
He can lure us and assure us,
  For we know he understands.
Scarcely anything to speak of
  'Scapes his trusty spectroscope;
But a hairy, scary streak of
  Gas defies his deepest dope.
A comet always gets him,
Always frets him and upsets him;
  For he can't make head or tail of it at all.

He can figure mass and motion,
  And can plumb the depths of space;
He can sail the cosmic ocean
  In the ships upon its face.
Though a thousand light-years from it,
  He can analyze a star;
But the coming of a comet
  Gives his intellect a jar.
A comet gets him hazy,
More than hazy, nearly crazy,
  For he can't make head or tail of it at all.

As a seed of the pomegranate,
  As a grain of golden sand,
He can weigh the winging planet
  In the hollow of his hand.
He can heft the bulk of Venus,
  And can tell you to a pound
How the difference between us—
  Earth and Venus—may be found.
But a comet has him guessing,
Effervescing, and confessing
  That he can't make head or tail of it at all.

In Statu Quo

How nicely is our solar system spaced!
  How orderly the planet movements are!
Aloof, sedate, self-centered, sober-paced,
  Each plods its way around the central star.

Far out, far out upon the soundless sea
  The derelicts of Cosmos rush and roll—
Star-hulks, that once in flaming panoply
  Sailed on the long cruise 'round the ultimate
    pole.

Rayless they ride, unnumbered ages through,
  Titanic hulks—let lesser craft beware!
Should our good ship, with all her quarreling
    crew,
  Ram one of them—ah, what an end were there!

Shattered against a wanderer in space,
  Old Earth would pass away in primal fire;
Like moths in flame, the so-called human race
  In a great blaze of glory would expire.

A consummation, do I hear you say,
  Devoutly to be wished? The prospect cheers.

Alas, that lee shore is so far away
We might not make it in a million years.

Hope tells, through Science, an unflattering tale:
Our lookouts, watching in the quiet night,
Find in our path nor white nor ebon sail.
The void is clear. There's no relief in sight!

"We Have With Us Tonight"

If the weather's wet and weary,
And the midnight finds me dreary,
As was frequently the case with Mr. Poe,
Do I meditate on Aidens
And on long-lost radiant maidens,
Or imagine I am talking to a crow?
Nay, the vision more depressing
My prophetic soul possessing
Is "a sea of upturned faces" in the air;
For I nervously conjecture
I shall *some* day do a lecture,
And that "sea of faces" gives me *mal de mer.*

Yes, I'm certain I shall do it,
And as certain I shall rue it:
I shall be, in the vernacular, a "shine";
For the bald, unvarnished fact is
That I haven't any practice,
Nor the slightest bit of talent in that line.
I shall hesitate and stammer,
And my heart will halt or hammer,
And the words will run together on the page,
Till I'd give my final dollar
Could I sink into my collar,
Or vanish like Mephisto through the stage.

So I live in mortal terror
Of that day of certain error
When I yield myself to looking like a gawk,
When some culture club invites me,
And the secretary writes me
That they'd "love to have me make a little talk."
I have many friends who work it
On the bowl-and-pitcher circuit,
Who attain Chautauquan honors and renown;
But the notion makes me queasy,
And although I *know* it's easy,
I shall simply gasp, "I thank you"—and sit down!

"Do You Get Me?"

There's a phrase that's fatiguing one hears every
day—
"Do you get me?"
Affected by persons with nothing to say—
Do you get me?
So much of their arid, inane conversation
Consists of this wearisome reiteration,
It gets on the nerves in a maddening way—
"Do you get me?"

When they babble this phrase every sentence or
two,
"Do you get me?"
One is tempted to say, "No, I'm ——ed* if I do!"
Do you get me?
Or suppose that one does, what the deuce does it
matter,
The getting or missing the point of their patter?
One listens politely until they are through.
Do you get me?

I can stand "Don't you know!" forty times in a
chat—
Do you get me?
I endure "Do you see?"—I am hardened to that—

*Do you get me?

Do you get me?
But of all the sapheaded, superfluous phrases
The one which the very least meaning conveys is
That abstract of all that is silly and flat,
"Do you get me?"

"You Know What I Mean"

There's another frayed phrase which I think
should be canned—
You know what I mean.
One hears it repeated on every hand—
You know what I mean.
This meaningless tag is affected by people
Who tell you a something as plain as a steeple,
And add, as if fearful you won't understand,
"You know what I mean."

A cold and wet May means a barnful of hay;
You know what I mean.
The city of Rome was not built in a day;
You know what I mean.
Two and two comes to four; if you add this to
seven
You get the astonishing sum of eleven.
A rolling stone gathers no moss, so they say;
You know what I mean.

The phrase, "Do you get me?" is moldy and flat—
You know what I mean.
There are whiskers on "What do you know about
that?"
You know what I mean.

As moldy as these, and as whiskered and hoary,
That tag to the triflingest, pifflingest story.
Kersplash in the brine of the Cannery's vat!—
"You know what I mean."

So We Are Informed

You may bank with one concern
Till they've nothing more to learn
Of your income and the story of your life;
You may pay your bills on time,
And may owe no man a dime,
And your credit may resemble Cæsar's wife;
You may keep your balance true,
And what business you may do,
May be open, like your countenance, and frank;
And you'll get the icy eye,
Peradventure, if you try
To borrow fifty dollars from your bank.
The President looks solemn

As the day's financial column,
And his manner is indifferent or cold;
And you wonder if he could
Have perhaps misunderstood,
And thought you wanted fifty thou' in gold.
You feel a trifle silly,
For he couldn't be more chilly
If accosted by a con man or a crank;
So you murmur, "Never mind,"
For it's difficult, you find,
To borrow fifty dollars from your bank.

O. F. Grimes

Old Grimes is dead, that o. f. man,—
  He's gone to get his dues;
He used to wear a black string tie
  And o. f. square-toed shoes.

Yes, Grimes is gone; we grieve that we
  No more shall see his face;
He used to own an o. f. watch
  Inside a chamois case.

He wound it with an o. f. key
  That hung upon the chain,
And carried when he walked abroad
  An ivory-headed cane.

He also wore a plain gold ring,
  And gartered up his sleeves,
And when the weather it was warm
  He lined his hat with leaves.

Ah, poor old Grimes is now at rest;
  His o. f. coat was black;
When taking money from his purse,
  He used to turn his back.

In these and other o. f. ways
His o. f. humors ran;
And everybody said he was
A fine old o. f. man.

Young Grimes

Tho' Grimes is dead, that good old man,
His son, Young Grimes, you know;
He lives in a suburbian house
That has a cupalo.

He is a light-complected man,
From affectation free;
You may have seen him reading in
The Public Liberry.

Young Grimes is careful of his health—
He's not an athalete;
He wears a muffler round his neck
And artics on his feet.

A chest protector, too, he thinks,
A move precautionary,
For bronical attacks may come
In Jan- or Febuary.

His morning's rolls and coffee stowed
(He owns a perculator),
He boards an Evingston express
Upon the Elevator.

Before he leaves he tellyphones
His grocer, Mr. Fitch,
And orders spinnage, reddishes,
And cramberries, and sich.

An ardent moving picture fan,
He goes to every fillum,
Accompanied by a maiden aunt
Who lives near State and Ellum.

I might run on with this, if I
Had nothing else to do;
But other things Young Grimes gets off
No doubt occur to you.

The Modern Muse

The modern muse endeavors to divest
Herself of flounces, frills, and furbelows.
The idea is presented plainly dressed;
The style is simple as the simplest prose.

Simplicity is all the go to-day—
The gospel Yeats and other poets preach.
"We tried," he lately said, "to strip away
All artifice, and get a style like speech."

They have succeeded. Rhetoric's taboo,
And all that's artificial is forsworn.
The thought is born as naked to the view
As was the poet when himself was born.

Yard upon yard of modern verse I read
As unadorned, as pleasing as is this.
An excellent intention I concede,
Yet somehow feel that somewhat is amiss.

In all the tapestries of modern song
I seem to sense that something should be changed.
To save my soul I can't tell what is wrong—
Perhaps the way the pattern is arranged.

The stuff is there, the structure's nobly planned,
The thoughts are winged, and bright as tropic
birds. . . .
I guess I'm waiting for some master hand
To come along and rearrange the words.

Form

I pause, ere bursting into song,
To find a form to fit my stuff.
I've used this mould, for instance, long
Enough.

A fondness for it I aver—
The flowing line, the sudden stop,
The cadence falling, as it were,
Kerflop!

This verse-form pleases me a lot,
And looks extremely well in type.
To find a novelty is not
A pipe.

A thought!
The last shall be the first instead.
Here is the novelty I've sought:
I stand the stanza on its head.

Again, the short line might be Num-
Ber Two.
The notion may appeal to some,
Tho' I don't fancy it. Do you?

Still what one says, and not the way
He casts it, matters more by far.
Example, this ingenious lay:
Nicht wahr?

The Muse Untrammeled

Come, my Muse, let us exalt the Obvious!
Unfettered, let us name
The sum of two and two, the which
Is four.
This form of verse, *vers libre,* lends itself
Exactly to our purpose,
For obvious reasons—
Reasons as obvious as Marie
Corelli.

We can be commonplace, my Muse, in o. f. forms,
But 'tis more difficult;
For, questing rimes, one ofttimes strays afield
And happens on some dainty flower of fancy
That elsewhere might have blushed
Unseen;
Or finds a piquant phrase, unworn,
Unfrazzled, and
Uncanned.

But in Free Verse, my Muse, the likelihood
Of such discoveries is less,
Though accidents *will* happen
In the worst regulated poems.

Here we are free as air, and hence
Our airy nothings, which are
Nothing if not airy;
And hence we give ourselves airs,
And air our grievances against the persons
Who cannot see us,
Who *could not* see us with the telescope
At Lick.

The Question Whither

Where shall we go for the summer?
  Here it is nearing July!
August for heat is a hummer:
  Whither, my love, shall we fly?

Here it is nearing July!
  Folks are preserving and canning.
Whither, my love, shall we fly?
  Time we were doing some planning.

Folks are preserving and canning;
  Summer is well under way.
Time we were doing some planning:
  Let us decide it to-day.

Summer is well under way.
  Come, heart's delight and companion,
Let us decide it to-day:
  What do you think of the Canyon?

Come, heart's delight and companion,
  Let us prepare to embark.
What do you think of the Canyon?
  What of the Yellowstone Park?

Let us prepare to embark.
  Hand me that map and that folder.
What of the Yellowstone Park?
  Hot? Well, we'll try something colder.

Hand me that map and that folder.
  Shall we take in the Big Trees?
Hot? Well, we'll try something colder—
  Emerald Lake or Louise.

Shall we take in the Big Trees?
  Or does Alaska allure you—
Emerald Lake, or Louise?—
  All one to me, I assure you.

Or does Alaska allure you?
  Pick any place to your wish.
All one to me, I assure you;
  Only, I'm going to fish.

Pick any place to your wish—
  August for heat is a hummer—
Only—*I'm* going to *fish!*
  Where shall we go for the summer?

Dolce Far Niente

(*"Persons possessing one thousand dollars can spend the remainder of their lives in the Marquesas Islands, where they need work only two hours a day to catch fish and pick bananas."*)

Ship me to the far Marquesas,
  Where there ain't no daily pape;
For from whittling witless wheezes
  I would very fain escape.

I would sit unnumbered days out
  With my back against a palm,
Where I'd read and smoke and gaze out
  On the ocean wide and calm.

Far away from witless wheezes,
  In those islands of the blest,
In the sleepy old Marquesas,
  I would get a longed-for rest.

Every day there is mañana,
  For the native's one ambish
Is to pick the gay banana
  And to snare the festive fish.

I would take some dusky tulip—
  Not to rear a savage race,
But to shake me up a julep
  When I felt the need of brace.

Oh, it's there that I'd be winging,
From this world of guff and gab,
For the bulbul is a-singing
In his ancient baobab.

In those isles of peace and plenty
I would loaf beneath a palm,
In a *dolce far niente*
And a transcendental calm.

Swat!

"Go, poor devil, get thee gone! Why should I hurt thee? The world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and me."
—Tristram Shandy.

My Uncle Toby was a saint,
Which I regret to say I ain't.
Each morn, no sooner do I rise
Then I begin to swat the flies.
As every day the opening doors
Let in the pests by twos and fours,
So every day I swat and swat
To polish off the latest lot;
And neither arm nor patience tires
Until the last foul fly expires.

My Uncle Toby graced the page
Of an unscientific age;
He did not understand, as I,
His duty was to swat the fly.
The world is wide; a house is not;
And that is why I swat and swat.
I swat them hither, swat them yon,
I swat them ever and anon;
I swat and swat from sun to sun,
And still the work is never done.

Summer Passes

Dear heart, the summer draweth to a close:
Pensive, I read the signs on every side.
Blown down the wind the petals of the rose,
And brown the uplands once with flowerets pied.

The corn is waving, waving, Annie dear,
And fledgling birds make trial of their wings;
For lack o' rain the hills are dull and sere,
The singing woodland brook no longer sings.

The katydid rasps to the moon's pale rays,
And goldenrod already gilds the field;
The sun moves south, and shorter grow the days;
The farmer garners what his acres yield.

And you who dwell in cities, too, may know
That summer's well-known bloom begins to pale.
A certain sign you see where'er you go—
One sign that tells the melancholy tale:
"Straw Hats, 75 cents."

Poissons d'Or

Two wisps of flame that twist and flash about
(Well imaged in Debussy's lovely score).
Summer was over, so they fished you out
From where you sported in the out-of-door.

And here I find you, after many days
Of absence, swimming in a kitchen dish;
I who am darkly ignorant of the ways
Of finny pets—I never kept a fish.

Your gentle mistress has forgotten you;
She'll be so sorry when I send her word.
She never dreamed you'd live the summer thro';
She thinks the cat has got you, or some bird.

But here you are, as lively as can be,
Twisting and darting in a rusty tub.
Confound it! I suppose it's up to me
To change your water and to find you grub.

What do you eat? Or do you thrive without?
Quelle corvée! (which is French for "What a chore!").
I half suspect I'd spill you down the spout
Were't not for Claude Debussy's *Poissons d'Or*.

Bring It Along!

Some poets are impelled to sing
The joys of so-called Gentle Spring,
While others find in Summer's heat
A fruitful theme on which to bleat.

Still others hear the Muses' call
And ululate about the Fall;
And there are even those that crow
When buried to their necks in snow.

But I am not disposed to yip
Until the eaves begin to drip;
Then, then my ten-cent lyre I claw,
And sing the January Thaw!

Back-Door Jingles

I

The Milkman

The milkman is intelligent,
He takes the well known bun;
For always, when he brings his milk,
He leaves it in the sun.

II

The Iceman

The iceman tracks in hunks of mud,
But in his way he's neat;
For always, when he leaves the house,
He stops to wipe his feet.

III

The Paper Boy

At Christmas time he rings the bell,
A smile upon his face.
Before, he never seemed to care;
He'd throw the paper anywhere,
Except the proper place.

IV

The Laundryman

The laundryman, who brings my shirts,
A deep compassion wins;

He staggers underneath a load
  Of bosom-boards and pins.

V

The Painter

The painter slops his paint around
  On picture, rug, and vase.
If he had time and paint enough
  He'd paint the holdam place.

VI

The Coalman

A sooty wight, the coalman,
  Who comes to fill the bin;
He doesn't track the kitchen, 'cause
  They never let him in.

Life's Little Ironies

For years he was wedded to danger,
To panic and terror a stranger;
  He had hairbreath escapes
  From all sorts of scrapes,
He weathered the wildest of storms.
  He clambered up perilous passes,
  And coasted across the crevasses;
    He was chased by a shark,
    And snared by a snark—
Faced death in its fearfulest forms.

He eluded without the least trouble
The fool-driven automobubble,
  He knew how to duck
  The trolley and truck,
The ambulance, cycle, and stage;
  And daily, from sunup to sundown,
  He escaped fifty times being run down;
    He showed to all wheels
    A clean pair of heels,
With a sprightliness rare for his age.

But one day his fortune forsook him,
And a horrible fate overtook him:

He was suddenly shocked
And as suddenly knocked
To the midst of the proximate week.
When he came to—oh climax ironic!—
He found—oh dénouement sardonic!—
That the cause of his fall—
Oh, wormwood and gall!—
Was a pushcart propelled by a Greek!

The Montessori Child

I know some little girls and boys
Who play with blocks and other toys;
But no one offers toys to me
Except to use as "stimuli."

I look at children romp and shriek;
They play a game called hide-and-seek;
They run and hide, and shout and run,
And have the greatest lot of fun.

But where I go they only play
To gather knowledge day by day,
And so absorb an education
Through "muscular coördination."

They gum rough letters on a board,
I learn them of my own accord;
I play at hide-and-seek with these,
And thus I get my A, B, C's.

Some children have a game called war,
They march lead soldiers on the floor;
But where I go it is enough
To know that things are smooth or rough.

While other children call it "fun"
To hop and skip and jump and run,
I do these things unconsciously
To set my little spirit free.

While other children merely play,
I garner wisdom every day.
I'm never up to childish tricks.
Yes, ain't I cute? I'm only six!

"Decorative Therapeutics"

("So important is the effect of environment upon mental and bodily health that we shall not be surprised to hear of physicians prescribing proper furniture and house decoration as aids to digestion and disposition.")

Do you wish to lead a healthy, happy life?
Be particular what furnishings you choose.
For there isn't any question
That these things affect digestion
And have much to do with biliousness and blues.

Old candlesticks are excellent for colds,
And pewter is a panacea for pain;
While a pretty taste in china
Has been known to undermine a
Settled tendency to water on the brain.

A highboy is invaluable for hives,
Or a lowboy if you're feeling rather low.
Colonial reproductions
Will allay internal ructions
And are splendid for a case of vertigo.

Old Chippendale is warranted for coughs,
And Heppelwhite is very good for nerves.
If your stomach is unstable
There is nothing like a table,
If it have the proper therapeutic curves.

Decorative therapeutics are the thing
If you happen to be feeling out of whack.
We are happy to assure you
That these things are bound to cure you,
For there's virtue in the smallest bric-à-brac.

In Hospital

(In a California hospital the nurses read the news of the day to the patients.)

Come hither, nurse, and hold my hand.
I recently have been trepanned,
And am, as a result of it,
Not feeling just exactly fit.
Come, tell me all the latest news;
'Twill dissipate my present blues.
Recite the doings of the day,
And drive dull pain and care away.

Has some one hanged his erring wife,
Or slain her with a butcher knife?
Has some rejected suitor shot
The moody maid who loved him not?
Some woman, in a jealous fit,
Cut up her husband bit by bit?
Relate the murders east and west—
Those in New Hampshire are the best.

There's nothing like a first-class crime
To pass the heavy-hanging time.
Details of grewsome murder plots
Cheer countless convalescents' cots.

A job sufficiently outré
Will liven up the dullest day.
So haste thee, nurse, and read to me
The care-dispelling potpourri.

"Such Is Life"

"Such is life!" the young man cries,
  Who has yet to know it.
"Such is life!" the old man sighs,
  When about to blow it.

Life is but "a fleeting show,"
  In Tom Moore's conclusion;
Life it but a vale of woe,
  Given for man's illusion.

But 'tis *not* a fleeting show;
  It is deeper, denser.
Would you really like to know?
  Hark to Herbert Spencer:

"Life is the definite combination of heterogeneous changes, both simultaneous and successive, in correspondence with external co-existences and sequences."

Such is life! When overwrought,
  Meditate upon it.
Memorize that golden thought;
  Paste it in your bonnet.

Holidays

I

The Actor

He sheds his trappings with a shout,
  He shelves the buskin for a day.
The Rialto first he strolls about,
  Then rushes to a matinée.

II

The Hackman

At last the yearly day has come
  When from dull work he's free.
He spends it with a Jehu chum,
  Driving to Calvary.

III

The Editor

"A truce to toil! Come, pleasant Myth!"
  He hies him to the beach;
And stoppeth every newsboy with,
  "Here! Give me one of each!"

Hot and Cold

I

The Whole Duty of Firemen

"The smashing of windows is unnecessary."—Mrs. Trench, *of Oak Park.*

A fireman ought to wipe his feet,
And while at work be nice and neat.
He shouldn't smash the window panes,
Or get the curtains full of stains;
Nor should he try to bust the roof—
A fireman should be more aloof.
When he is done he must be sure
To rearrange the furniture
And things upon the parlor table—
At least as far as he is able.

II

The Iceman

How glad to our sight is the recreant iceman,
When after long waiting he heaves into view.
He says he will call the first thing in the morning,
And comes, if at all, about half after two.
His heart may be kind, but the truth is not in him:
The day is nigh done when he knocks at the door.

He lets in the flies and he gums up the kitchen—
The muddy-shoed iceman who tracks up the floor;
The obdurate iceman, the infamous iceman,
The thrice-accurst iceman who tracks up the floor.

The weather is hot and the icebox is empty;
We wait for the wagon from hour to hour.
The eggs are half addled, the bacon is rancid,
The butter is melted, the cream has gone sour.
He said he'd be sure to be early on Monday,
But when he tramps in it is two, three, or four;
But he wears such a grin that you simply can't cuss him—
The idiot iceman who gums up the floor;
The blithering iceman, the maddening iceman,
The good-natured iceman who tracks up the floor.

So Shall It Be

If twenty years hence you should be
  Inhabiting this sphere,
I wish you'd do a thing for me,
  As I may not be here.

I'd have you cast an eye about
  In Art's great market-place,
And mark the men who fleer and flout
  And wear a scornful face.

Interrogate these scornful men
  And you will find, I think,
That Chaos has arrived again,
  And Art is on the blink.

The painter's queer as queer can be,
  The sculptor is as bad,
The poet's singing off the key,
  The music-maker's mad.

Thus will they greet each rising star,
  So will they blight and blast,
And rail against the things that are,
  And harp upon the past.

These scoffers, these obstructionists,
  These fossils—who are they?
The glad young, mad young Futurists
  Who prance around to-day.

The Cubist

Blessings on you, little man!
Do you really think you can
By some geometric law
Make us see the thing *you* saw?
Do you really think that Art
Is of Science any part,
And that through triangulation
We shall come to *your* sensation?
Have you, honestly, a notion
Art is other than Emotion—
That it is, for you or us,
Differential calculus?

Nay. With what it means to *you,*
Art has simply nought to do;
Art begins when you've conveyed
Meaning of the thing you've made.
You may show it well or ill;
That is question of your skill.
But the meaning you *must* show,
Else it isn't Art. Lord, no!
Any baby building blocks
Any Cubist canvas mocks.

You know this as well as I,
So I know your "art" a lie.
Music's not acoustics, man;
Painting's not a builder's plan.
Eyes are eyes and ears are ears,
So it has been through the years;
So it will be, so it must,
When your crazy-quilts are dust.

Have You Ever?

"Have you ever," queries a dramatic agent, "thought of writing for the stage?"

Does your lot in life content you? Are they coming as you like?
Are you satisfied with just a daily wage?
When your barber shop is idle or your hands are on a strike,
Have you ever thought of writing for the stage?

Perhaps you are a plumber, and it's rather dull in summer;
Some congenial task your leisure might engage.
While you're waiting for an order to repair a broken pipe,
Have you ever thought of writing for the stage?

Or perchance you are a tinsmith, or a janitor mayhap,
Or a writer for a daily printed page.
Whatever be your station or your daily occupation,
Have you ever thought of writing for the stage?

Improve each idle minute. There is fame and fortune in it.

You may be the georgemcohan of your age.

Nearly everybody tries it, so we venture to advise it.

Have you ever thought of writing for the stage?

The Dance

I cannot dance the old things now;
  The reason is I find them slow—
Not that I "can't remember how
  They go."

The waltz, on which our grandmas frowned
  And Byron penned a rhapsody,
Now seems a stupid round and round
  To me.

The o. f. waltz is now passé;
  I couldn't dance it for a minute
Without the modern "hesita-
  Tion" in it.

As for the reels, quadrilles, and such,
  The schottische and the polonaise—
They seem as merry as a crutch
  These days.

They had not, the entire bunch,
  One kick to match a Tango step.
They had no go, no snap, no punch,
  No pep.

But I can't dance the Tango now,
And mingle with the belles and beaux;
I simply can't remember how
It goes.

Ruthless Mr. Pinkapank

My good friend Mr. Pinkapank abominates the Hun:
He'd like to see the tribe extinct, when all is said and done.
He's for the war from A to Z, a patriot true and tried—
Provided all his daily wants are duly gratified.

My good friend Mr. Pinkapank deplores an early peace:
Until the Hun is down and out the conflict must not cease.
I never knew a person so implacable as he—
Provided he can have four lumps of sugar in his tea.

My good friend Mr. Pinkapank says Germany must pay
For all she did in Belgium, if it takes till Judgment Day.
He's for the little peoples—Roumanian, Serb, and Pole—
Provided he can have two pats of butter with his roll.

My good friend Mr. Pinkapank detests a pacifist
And argues very truly that "he never would be missed."
He'll bawl out pacifism in a way to make you cry—
Provided he has cream enough to drench his apple pie.

My good friend Mr. Pinkapank (to make a long tale short)
Is a very warlike person of a very ruthless sort.
I never knew so mild a man to be so fond of strife—
Provided he is not required to change his mode of life.

Revised

Ye mariners of England
That guard our native seas,
Whose flag has braved a thousand years
The battle and the breeze,
Your glorious standard launch again
To match a modern foe,
And fly through the sky
While the stormy winds do blow—
While the navies grapple in the blue,
And the stormy winds do blow.

The spirits of your fathers
May start from every wave,
For oak decks were their field of fame
And ocean was their grave.
But now where Phaeton once fell
Your manly hearts shall glow,
While you fare through the air
As the stormy winds do blow—
While the navies grapple in the blue
And the stormy winds do blow.

Britannia needs no bulwarks;
Her towers are out of date.

Now far above the mountain waves
  Her warriors aviate.
With thunders from her aeroplanes
  She quells the foreign foe;
And they lunge and they plunge,
  While the stormy winds do blow—
While the navies grapple in the blue
  And the stormy winds do blow.

Washington's Birthday, 1902

Dear George, in serio-cynic way
We turn our thoughts to you to-day;
  Not George the singularly pure
    Tongued laddie
Who could not lie, but George the man
Who could. . . . Sometimes we wonder, can
  This be the country of which you're
    The daddy?

The same, George. No, not quite the same.
We've gathered wealth, and strength, and fame,
  Improved upon the parent stock,
    Grown wiser.
(One moment, George. Prince Henry's here.
Excuse us while we add our cheer:
  "Hoch!"—or, as most of us say, "Hock!—
    Der Kaiser!")

We're very German, George, to-day,
And more disposed to drink and play,
  Than list to patriotic screed
    Or sermon.
The Prince is with us. No offense.
Your name, of course, takes precedence.

In other words, dear George, you lead
The German.

You've led the German, George, before,
You led him, on the Jersey shore,
A merry dance in 'seventy-six—
December.
You rather jarred the British crown
That Christmas night in Trenton Town.
The German crowd lost all the tricks—
Remember?

Of course you do, and wonder how
It happens that our voices now
In praise of Deutschland's royal tar
We're lifting;
And how you hear on every hand
The language of Das Vaterland.
No doubt you wonder, "Whither are
We drifting?"

It's all right, George. You see, we got
The job to build the Kaiser's yacht.
As for the rest, pray how could we
Oppose it?
You've had a birthday every year;
And you'll have others, never fear.
Here's a fresh foaming stein to thee!
George, "Prosit!"

The Bee in the War Lord's Bonnet, 1903

Air—"The Bonnets of Bonny Dundee."

To the Baron von Sternberg 't was William who spoke,
"Ere I carry my point there are heads to be broke;
But carry it I will, and the sequel will show
There is naught to the doctrine of Dr. Monroe.

"Come fill up my pipe and fill up my stein!
Send forty more warships across the blue brine!
South American colonies—glory and gold—
Is the bee in the bonnet of William the Bold!

"There are sour-faced Britons and Russians and Franks,
Black-browed Venezuelans and menacing Yanks.
There is spite in their looks, there is fear in their eyes,
As onward I press to the coveted prize.

"Come fill up my pipe, etc.

"There are grasslands for cattle and farmlands to till,
There is guano in Chile and mines in Brazil,

There are riches by sea, there are riches by land
For the sons of the sons of the old Fatherland.

"Come fill up my pipe, etc.

"There's a shot in the locker, a shot in the gun;
The hide of the Panther's a-flash in the sun;
There's a purr for a friend, and a growl for a foe,
And zur Hoelle mit der doctrine of Dr. Monroe!

"Come fill up my pipe, etc."

On the table he brought down his fist with a crash,
And twisted the fangs of his fearful moustache.
And then in a stein of fresh lager and cold
Died away the wild war notes of William the Bold.

"Come fill up my pipe, come fill up my stein!
Send forty more warships across the blue brine!
South American colonies—glory and gold—
Is the bee in the bonnet of William the Bold!"

Ballade of Old-Time Clowns

(To Bernard Shaw, Prince of Jesters.)
"Ou sont les pitres d'autrefois."—H. D.

Where (as ballades so oft begin)
The classic clowns of yesterday?
Where Guillaume of the famous grin,
And eke the gifted Gaultier?
And Tabarin, whose equine-play
Appealed to foreheads high and steep?
Gentles, we hand them this bouquet:
It was to laugh and not to weep.

Where is the fool whose wagging chin
Wiled for his King the hours away?
Vanished into the great Has-Been
L'Angely the clever, and Triboulet.
And Scaramouche, the protegé
Of Lou the Great—*he* earned his keep.
To hear that blithesome donkey bray,
It was to laugh and not to weep.

Where are the zanies, fat and thin,
Who joyed the groundlings—where are they?
Gone, like the monarch's harlequin,
They who tickled the common clay.
Gone the bumpkin who owned their sway;

Clown and rustic together sleep.
This is the tribute we may pay:
It was to laugh and not to weep.

Prince, I have but this word to say:
The old-time jester's wit was cheap,
BUT—(here's the point I would convey)—
It was to laugh and not to weep.

The Lazy Writer

In summer I'm disposed to shirk,
As summer is no time to work.

In winter inspiration dies
For lack of out-door exercise.

In spring I'm seldom in the mood,
Because of vernal lassitude.

The fall remains. But such a fall!
We've really had no fall at all.

Shaw

(*After reading "Major Barbara."*)

Let critics chew your plays, and find
  Fit matter for their trade of whacking;
Let pundits analyze your mind,
  And say that this or that is lacking.

For critic sass or pundit gas
  I do not care a week-old cruller:
I only know that when you pass
  This world will be a damsite duller.

Left Handed Immortality

"This novel was written between Oct., 1796, and Aug., 1797, and offered to Mr. Cadell, who declined to see the manuscript."
—From the Preface to "Pride and Prejudice."

Deathless Cadell! Though long since turned to clay,
Your name lives on with the immortal Jane's.
She sought you one rememberable day,
Humbly, and had her labor for her pains.

To you the chance was offered to inscribe
Upon her title-page your lustrous name,
But, true to the traditions of your tribe,
You turned her down, and—gained a lasting fame!

Song of the Unconscious

I

Truth.

"What is truth," was asked of old,
By one Pilate, Pontius.
Where is truth, we now are told:
'Tis in the Unconscious.

What is this, if not the well
Wherein truth lies hidden?
From which she (as Freudians tell)
Issues forth unbidden?

Down you let your bucket fly,
Seeking inspiration,
And the bucket comes up dry—
Not a cerebration.

But when you are sound asleep
As a rustic maiden,
Then the bucket, from the deep,
Comes up heavy laden:

Laden with the weirdest brew
Ever seen or heard of,
Fraught with Freudian meanings you
Don't believe a word of.

Nor do I. I think it's rot,
All the psycho-chatter.
Whether it be true or not,
Does it really matter?

II

"Say It With Flowers"

Sweetheart, I would send you flow'rs,
On your breast I'd pin them,
Were it not the Freudian pow'rs
See such symbols in them.

There is not a flower that blows
Free from hintings hazy,
From the fragrant, flagrant Rose
To the modest Daisy.

I am strictly Peter Bell
On this floral question,
Yet the Primrose, Freudians tell,
Reeks with dark suggestion.

"Pansies, that's for thoughts"—
hear! hear!
Naughty little Pansy!
She is just as bold, my dear,
As the shameless Tansy.

I would send you Violets—yet
Even of *them* I'm fearful.
In the complex days, my pet,
One can't be too keerful.

"Alone at Last"

Some persons (whose names I'll not mention)
  Exist in a passional stew,
Defying the tyrant Convention,
  And bidding Dame Gossip go to.
Their loves, maugre jibes of the jealous,
  Are pure as the gold of the mint.
Their lives are their own, so they tell us—
  Then why do they wallow in print?

I'll forgive all their fond indiscretions,
  Quite willing that they shall be free;
I'll overlook all their transgressions,
  As nothing whatever to me.
They want to be free, I say let 'em;
  Let license be theirs without stint.
I even would aid and abet 'em,
  Provided they kept out of print.

But Lord, no. You simply can't lose 'em;
  No sin but they're keen to confess.
Reporters are clasped to their bosom,
  They pour out their souls to the press.
Of dignity not a suggestion,
  Of reticence never a hint.
Oh, why—to return to my question—
  Oh, why do they wallow in print?

Desiccated Classics

I

Anacreon LXII

Haste thee, boy, and hither bring
Water from a crystal spring!
Down my gullet it shall pour,
Where the red wine ran before.
Summon nymphs who're not too gay,
And at bean-bag we will play;
Bacchus, canned with all his crew,
Brings no more the nightly stew.
Nix, we've banished all that stuff—
I for one had had enough.
Let the Scythians get a skinful:
We have barred the booze as sinful.
Haste thee, shrimp, and hither bring
Flagons from the crystal spring!

II

Anacreon XXI

The old earth drinks when it is dry
The distillations of the sky,
And then exhales a dewy breath
That keeps the tenderest plant from death.
It rains, and all the streams that roll
Are drink for Neptune's flowing bowl,

At which the ever thirsty sun
Tipples as soon as day's begun.
Yon moon, that "nowhere doth abide,"
Is always out to get a tide.
To drink is nature's first great law,
So, boy, another flagon draw!
I'll pledge, by all the founts that flow,
The Universe in H_2O!

Passing Strange

I read a great deal of *vers libre,*
And "images" scan by the score,
But never a line,
Be it ever so fine,
Is added to memory's store.

Though avid of Amy and Ezra,
Though keen for the poems they write,
If requested to quote
Either luminous pote,
I'd have to say "Pass!" or "Good-night!"

It may be that memory's so cluttered
With Shelley and Shakespeare and Blake,
With Housman and Horace,
Macaulay and Morris,
And Dante and Dryden and Drake —

The new stuff has no room to enter:
The fault, past denying, is mine.
Yet I still think it strange,
As the moderns I range,
That I never remember a line.

"Very pretty French verses of H. D.'s," confide several readers. "But—what do they mean?" Well, we'd not make oath, but as we imperfectly translate them they run somewhat as follows:

Sonnet to the "Boobs"

"Plus doux que les soirs vermeils de l'automne."

Sweeter than Autumn's golden evenings are,
Or vernal skies that bend o'er daffodils;
Sweeter than windflowers that the wildwood star,
Or crannied blossoms on the April hills;
Sweeter than vows breathed by a convent maid,
Or earthier vows by lover to his lass;
Sweeter than thrush-notes in the darkening glade,
Or river singing through the swaying grass;
Sweeter than roseleaves in the boudoir air,
Than secret sweeter, sweeter than a smile,
Or the sweet tangles of Neæra's hair,
Or tenderest embrace, or wantonest wile;—
Sweeter than all the sweetness I may hint,
It is to see one's blooming name in print.

October

"The skies they were ashen and sober,
The leaves they were crispèd and sere."
Quite so. For the month was October,
In this most immemorial year—
This beaucoup immemorial year.

The skies, like ourselves, they are sober,
The leaves, like ourselves, they are sere;
There is nothing to drink this October,
Not even a light wine or beer—
Not ev'n that poor creature small beer.

How few are the rhymes for October
For poets of accurate ear;
But now they may venture on "no-beer":
Imperfect? Ah, yes—but how near!—
How dismally, drearily near!

As for instance: The month was October,
Our throats they were crispèd and sere;
And I said, "Ulalume, there is no beer
In this arid mid-region of Weir—
Not a sip, not a sud in all Weir."

Her face it grew ashen and sober,
I knew that her end it was near.

She died by the dark tarn of Auber,
And I laid my lost love on a bier—
On a thrice immemorial bier.

Love's Cannery

See! I give myself to you, Beloved.
My words are little jars
For you to take and put upon a shelf.
—Amy Lowell.

Jar 1. Your lips are like the red, red rose.
Jar 2. Your silken hair is like the night.
Jar 3. Your breast is whiter than the snows.
Jar 4. You are a phantom of delight.

Jar 5. I am the needle, you the pole.
Jar 6. I am the singer, you the song.
Jar 7. I am the body, you the soul.
Jar 8. Oh, love me little, love me long!

Jar 9. You are too fair for mortal speech.
Jar 10. You are the apple of my eye.
Jar 11. You are a pippin, you're a peach.
Jar 12. And I shall love you till I die.

These thoughts are countless as the twinkling stars;
I give them to you freely—help yourself.
My words, Beloved, are as little jars
For you to take and put upon a shelf.

Index and number them, from A to Z;
Range them in ordered rows, alow, above.
These jars I give you, Sweet, and you shall be
The Keeper of the Cannery of Love.

Words, Words, Words

"Though I have many words,
What woman's satisfied?"
—Mr. Yeats in The Little Review.

Now, some there are who whisper love,
And some there are who shout it;
And there are others—see above—
Who merely talk about it.

It's well enough fine words to spill,
Whate'er the lady's station;
But something more is asked for, Bill,
Than highflown conversation.

Young Romeo could talk all day;
Than his no words are warmer.
But when it came to loving—say,
That boy was some performer!

Though ladies fair, of every sort,
Admire a chaste expression,
Don't talk yourself clear out of court,
But exercise discretion.

To a Friend

You tell me that another has your heart,
And that until this time you have not known
What love is. And a wedded pair must part
Because an earlier, lesser love has flown.

You tell me this, and I say go your way
And read the answer in the coming years.
Were Wisdom's very self to bid you stay
Her words would fall on unattending ears.

I am not Wisdom's self, but this you'll learn:
New love is never rooted as the old;
And the old passion will revive and burn
Before the ashes of the new are cold.

Two trees that grow together to the sun
Become as one, and must as one remain;
A pair that live a dozen years as one,
Never, my friend, can be as two again.

So Nature orders it. And who shall say
It is not founded on a law divine?
But I have done with preaching; go your way.
Pass as the idle wind these words of mine.

A Duo in Hades

ADAM:

Thousands of years, my dear, have ebbed away
Since that forever memorable day
When you discovered the Forbidden Fruit,
And, knowing I should like it, led me to 't.

EVE:

And willingly you went, as I recall,
Altho', of course, they blamed *me* for the Fall.
Till that momentous day our life was X;
We ate the apple, and discovered—Sex!

ADAM:

And both, as I recall, were tickled pink,
And talked of nothing else. I sometimes think
We gabbed so much that God himself was bored,
And sent an Angel with a flaming sword.

EVE:

I spoke to-day with one but newly come.
He tells me that the world is all a-hum
With the self-same discovery that we
In Eden made beneath the Knowledge Tree.

ADAM:

And nought, I hear, their childish prattle checks;

They gab of Sex, and Sex, and Sex, and Sex.
In books, and plays, and art this subject rules;
I'm told they even teach it in the schools.

EVE:
The shade but newly come to Hades saith
That men of sense are being bored to death;
And tho' he's damned he counts himself as blest
To 'scape from Sex, and have eternal rest.

An Exercise in Emphasis

I looked! I loved! And passion burned
With violence Vesuvian
Until the fatal day I learned
He was a married man!

The good ones seldom trot alone;
They jog in Hymen's silken span.
Ah, foolish me! I might have known
He was a married man.

Oh, who can fathom my distress!
Incredulous, I murmured, "Can
This thing be true?" Ah, yes; ah, yes—
He *was* a married man!

My passion decorously waned;
My blood no longer rampant ran.
Love's jig was up when he explained
He was a *married* man.

"Wait, love!" said he; and, still in thrall,
I listened to his legal plan
And gave assent; for, after all,
He was a married *man.*

I waited on, in bliss sublime,
  Until the court should lift the ban,
Only to learn, a second time,
  He was a married man!

Eighteen

When Little One was seven years
She lent me most attentive ears
The while I read from fairy lore,
And, never sated, asked for "More!"
She courted my society,
And nightly perched upon my knee;
Then we two footed, hand in hand,
The storied roads of Fairyland.

When seven more years had flitted by
We grew less chummy, she and I.
Her interest in fairies waned,
Though mine, and my belief, remained.
School friends pressed forward for my place,
Leaving me distanced in the race.
A nod, a smile, was all I drew—
Meekly accepted as my due.

That phase is past, I joy to say,
And we are chums again to-day.
We read, as once, but now 'tis she
Who holds the book and reads to me;
Or, head to head, again we pore
On volumes of remembered lore,

And foot together, hand in hand,
The dappled dells of Fairyland.

The storied roads come soon or late
To where the Prince and chariot wait.
Remembering this, in Fairyland,
I hold her tightly by the hand.
But presently she'll slip away,
All on a silver summer day;
A nod, a smile—and she'll be gone
With Charming in his phaeton!

Expectation

Many Christmas-tides have brought
  Joys to set my heart a-dancing
Since I trembled in my cot,
  Listening to the Reindeer prancing.

Time hath ambled many a year
  Since a child in far-off Boyland
Cocked a trusting, patient ear
  For old Santa's train from Toyland.

Comes a dearer visitor
  With the Christmas that approaches,
And the train I'm listening for
  Is a train of railway coaches.

Many Christmas-tides have brought
  Gifts I gratefully acknowledge;
This the best of all the lot—
  Daughter's coming home from college!

A Day of Days

Mother, wake and call me early, call me early,
mother dear;
To-day's the saddest, gladdest day in all the glad,
sad year.
For some one who is dear to us is soon to go away:
"Beyond the Alps," et cet'ra: Daughter graduates
today.

To Bishop Summer

("Recollections of Home.")

At the piano—in a day
When I was young and you were younger,
When you were Music's protegé,
And I a budding ballad-monger—
  You played a piece replete with frills,
  Composed, I think, by S. S. Mills.

You thought to serve the heavenly maid,
And much of skill was in your fingers;
Extremely well, I thought, you played—
The pleasant recollection lingers.
  No churchman you. Who could foresee
  That one day you would bishop be!

Time turns the leaves of life for all,
Leaf upon leaf, for fools or sages;
You saw, in letters gold, the Call
When you had lived through thirty pages.
  How you responded, is set down
  Upon the tablets of our town.

You follow, westward still, the star
Of the Lord God's empire. We speed you,
Knowing you cannot fare so far
Your good repute will not precede you.

He marches ever in the van
Who lives to serve his fellow-man.

. . . . . .

If over the piano's keys
Your fingers ever "wander idly,"
And wake that "piece" which used to please,
Which long ago was played so widely—
Let memory for a moment dwell
On him who bids you here farewell!

Sundown

(When the wounded in hospital came to die, said a British officer, their last request in many cases was for the prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep.")

When my sun of life is low,
  When the dewy shadows creep,
Say for me before I go,
  "Now I lay me down to sleep."

I am at the journey's end,
  I have sown and I must reap;
There are no more ways to mend—
  Now I lay me down to sleep.

Nothing more to doubt or dare,
  Nothing more to give or keep;
Say for me the children's prayer,
  "Now I lay me down to sleep."

Who has learned along the way—
  Primrose path or stony steep—
More of wisdom than to say,
  "Now I lay me down to sleep."

What have you more wise to tell
  When the shadows round me creep? . . .
All is over, all is well!
  Now I lay me down to sleep.

Babette Ballads

The Horoscope

(*Concerning a young gentlelady born Saturday, Feb.* 19, 1916, *at* 3:20 *p. m. Zariel, Astrologer.*)
Jupiter is in the celestial sign Aries, and in the House of the Higher Mind, Philosophy, Spirituality, Long Journeys, and Relatives, and is in fine aspect to Mercury and Venus, giving strong talent for music, art, literature, science, and philosophy, and a public career.

The Sun bespeaks the best of health,
The unafflicted Moon gives wealth.

The good aspect of Mercury
Points to advanced mentality.

Venus, in House of Higher Mind,
Is more than usually kind.

Mars shakes a finger, says "Beware!"
And urges unremitting care.

Great Jupiter, with hearty hail,
Tells (see above) a flattering tale.

Though Saturn would withhold a boon,
He is made gracious by the Moon.

Uranus sees no serious checks,
But warns against the sterner sex.

Neptune his weighty word engages
That "she'll go rattling down the ages."

. . . . .

Oh, twinkle, twinkle, little star,
No more I wonder *why* you are.

Your *raison d'être* now is clear:
You've waited for this magic year,

To dance, with others, at the birth
Of the most gifted child of Earth.

Early Training

In a basket, all the day,
I must sleep the hours away;
  And it does no good to cry,
  For they simply let me lie.
No one rocks or coddles me;
I am being "trained," you see.

There are roses on the wall,
But the basket is so tall
  I can only see the flowers
  When, at the appointed hours,
I am lifted out with care,
To be taken down the stair.

After I am dressed and fed,
Back I go again to bed.
  Sleeping, waking, there I lie,
  And it does no good to cry.
I shan't have a bit of fun
Till this being "trained" is done.

Sleep Time

When you sail for Poppyland,
Clasping fingers keep my hand.
Soon they loosen, and I know
You are where the poppies blow.

Looking through the dark I lie,
Thinking of your by-and-by,
Wondering what of joy and tears
Lies beyond the veil of years.

Then I spread the coverlet
O'er your flower heart, Babette,
Wishing that it held a charm
That should keep you safe from harm.

Will the new world be as kind
As the one we've left behind?
Or will all its charm be flown
Ere you are a woman grown?

Questions these that will not, dear,
Trouble you for many a year—
Which you will not understand
Till you hold a little hand.

An Accident

To-day, while sitting up in bed,
I tumbled forward on my head,
And then fell out upon the floor,
A thing I never did before.

My! what a dreadful fuss it made!
For everybody was afraid
I'd hurt my head or sprained an arm,
Or done myself some other harm.

I wasn't hurt the leastest bit,
But Mother almost had a fit,
And Father said, "Well, soon or late!
That's over with, at any rate!"

She Sings

When, Babette, with joy you're stirred,
You remind me of a bird,
As your little lungs you fill
And give out a bird-like trill.

Where you learned it, goodness knows;
From some birdie, I suppose.
Many feathered troubadours
Have their nests not far from yours.

More than music born of art,
Bird-notes touch the human heart;
So, Babette, I feel a thrill
When you sound your little trill.

Birds and babies are, we know,
Best of creatures here below;
But for them how dull a place
Were this drifting speck in space.

With Father

When nurse is out, and mother too,
  We have a lark, Babette and I;
We do the things we shouldn't do,
  All training rules defy.

We rockaby—that's very wrong,
  It leads to heaven knows what ill;
And while I hum an ancient song
  She listens, very still:

Lord Bateman was a noble lord,
  A noble lord he was of high degree;
And he determ-in-ed to go abroad,
  To go strange countries for to see.

To rockaby is very wrong;
  Babette, you should be lying flat.
And you should cry—it makes you strong,
  And keeps off too much fat.

To rock like this, and dance on knee,
  Too much excites your growing mind.
Some day you'll realize that we
  Were cruel to be kind.

Lord Bateman was a noble lord,
A noble lord he was of high degree;
And he determ-in-ed to go abroad,
To go strange countries for-r-r-r to-o-o
see-e-e.

The Journey

Ho, Porter! Sweep the drawing-room
With all your might and main
And sterilize each cloth and broom—
Babette is on the train.

Ho, Engineer! Keep day and night
A steady eye and brain,
And read the semaphores aright—
Babette is on the train.

Conductor, scan your orders well,
And scan them once again.
Let tower unto tower tell,
Babette is on the train.

Railroaders all, along the way,
By river, hill, and plain,
Stern vigil keep thro' night and day—
Babette is on the train.

WHELEN, *for the Big Four.*
CURTIS, *for the Southern.*

Behind the Door

Hither, thither, little feet
  Patter on the floor;
Still am I in my retreat,
  Hid behind the door.

If my hiding-place is guessed,
  Comes a gleeful cry;
But if vain should be the quest,
  There are tears to dry.

. . . . .

In the House of Life, my dear,
  All is not so fair;
Happiness is hiding here,
  Sorrow hiding there.

May the gods your life endow
  From their boundless store!
May you always find, as now,
  Love behind the door.

Omens

Babbie, dear, I feel concern
For your literary turn;
You've not come to three years, yet
You know all your alphabet.

You see letters everywhere—
In the carpet, in the chair:
"There's a Y," and "There's a P,"
Here an O, and there a T.

Can it be, you little sprite,
That some day you, too, will write?
Mercy, Babbie! I must find
Some distraction for your mind.

The Warrior

"Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you?"

Babette, this was a luminous day
(In days that will mean much to you);
For Marshal Joffre passed my way,
And smiled, and spoke a word or two.

And there was in his granite face,
And in, anon, his kindly glance,
Something that glorified the place
And woke, as with a wand, Romance.

Time will unknot, with fingers cool,
The present tangled ball of yarn,
And you, Babette, a girl at school,
Will read the story of the Marne;

Learn how, beneath a pall of smoke,
Affrighted Freedom clutched her breast;
And how the Horror halted . . . broke . . .
God's mercy there made manifest.

. . . . .

And looking from your schoolgirl task—
The study of a great campaign—
Perhaps, in wondering voice, you'll ask,
"And did you once see Joffre plain?"

At the Naval Station: Colors

Our hats are off, the brasses blare,
  The emblem of the free
Comes dropping through the quiet air;
  I hold you up to see.

'Tis only, to your wondering eyes,
  One more thing strange and new,
But, Babbie, while that banner flies
  This world is safe for you.

Our ships of war have sailed away,
  Their paths we cannot know;
But where they ride they hold the tide
  Against the sullen foe.

The Hun may overrun the land,
  But freedom holds the seas;
The navies keep the upper-hand,
  And Neptune wears the keys.

See, Babbie! now the flag is furled,
  The band goes marching by.
God grant that in a cleaner world
  Our colors soon may fly!

Empty

Your silver drinking-cup drained dry,
You fetch a funny little sigh:
"All gone!" you say, and take it up
And eye the bottom of the cup.

"All gone!" You fetch another sigh,
And tilt the cup and hold it high.
One would suppose, so grave your air,
That you could read the legend there—
"Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas."

Absence

When I'm on a long, long "bye,"
'Neath a foreign rooftree resting,
Thoughts like swallows homeward fly
To the niche where you are nesting.

Then I wish I worked in sounds—
Words at best have limitations:
Music sets no metes and bounds
To the heart's communications.

Music's language could I reach,
I should write some pensive measures
Telling what our English speech
Cannot tell, for all its treasures.

Baccalaureate

Solemnly the Senior Class
  Moves the aisle adown.
Stand up, Bab! Watch sister pass
  In her cap and gown!

Once she was as small as you,
  With as much to know.
I wrote ballads for her, too—
  Long, oh, long ago.

She was once, like you, a fay,
  Come with us to dwell,
But she vanished quite one day;
  Whither—who can tell?

Some day you will take your flight
  From the elfin bough:
Ah, if I could hold you tight,
  As I hold you now!

But you'll dance away from me,
  Faery aisles adown;
And, grown up, a Senior be,
  In a cap and gown.

Replanted

Stripped of toys, the Christmas Tree
Now is where it used to be,
Rooted in the kindly earth,
Waiting for the Spring's re-birth.

Little Tree, may nature fend you!
Little Tree, good luck attend you!
So you may, next Christmas-tide,
With our little Bab abide.

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